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REPORT

## **Democrats Work to Continue the Successes of Title I**

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# Democrats Work to Continue the Successes of Title I

Senate Republicans claim that Federal education programs, especially Title I, are not successful, in order to justify their radical restructuring of public education through block grants and vouchers. Republicans argue that Federal support of education has achieved few results. As one Republican Senator on the HELP Committee said, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* “has provided very little in the way of positive effects on society.”<sup>1</sup>

This report gives a history of Title I and provides straight answers about its record, positive impact, and the successes of other Federal education programs. This report will show that the Federal Government has not failed our public school children and that the adoption of the Republican bill would undermine the improvement and reform of public schools.

This report will also show that reforms in 1994 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*:

- accelerated reform in schools;
- catalyzed innovations in education;
- increased student achievement;
- narrowed the achievement gap between white students and students of color;
- reduced the numbers of students dropping out of school;
- increased the number of students taking challenging courses;
- reduced the administrative burden of schools and States;
- increased targeting to high-poverty areas;
- generated progress on State standards;
- helped urban districts, especially high-poverty schools; and
- increased teacher quality.

## What is Title I?

### ***Passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act***

In 1965, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) was enacted as part of President Johnson's "War on Poverty." Title I, the largest program in ESEA, is intended to help address the greater educational challenges facing high-poverty communities by targeting extra resources to school districts and schools with the highest concentrations of poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, more than 11 million children in approximately 45,000 public schools receive Title I assistance. Approximately 300,000 of these children are migrant and 200,000 are homeless. This assistance supports local school reform and activities like whole school reform; professional development for teachers; improved curricula; greater parental involvement; and extended learning time.

ESEA marked a turning point in Federal education policy — the enactment of ESEA was the first time the Federal Government recognized the necessity of providing Federal aid to elementary and secondary schools in order to prevent poverty from limiting academic achievement.<sup>3</sup> The central objective of Title I is to support State and local efforts to ensure that all children meet challenging standards by providing additional resources for schools and students who have furthest to go in achieving this goal.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Early Days of Title I***

When ESEA was passed by Congress in 1965, Title I was designed to be a block grant program. Under the original legislation, similar to current Republican proposals, school districts with high concentrations of children from low-income families could use Title I money for a broad range of projects, provided the State approved the project. In effect, Title I operated as a block grant because of minimal accountability requirements on the State level and no accountability requirements on the Federal level.<sup>5</sup>

Misuses of the program are well documented. In the first four years of the program, intended beneficiaries of the program — including many poor

children — did not receive Title I funds.<sup>6</sup> In fact, resources often did not go to eligible children at all. A few examples of the misappropriation and abuse discovered by auditors include: a district that increased the salaries of its school district personnel; a State that allowed districts to buy equipment for non-Title I schools; a school district that bought three tubas; a city that spent \$35,000 on band uniforms; and a city that spent \$63,000 on 18 portable swimming pools. One school district used its Title I funds to perpetuate segregation by renovating a trailer school in an all-black area.

To ensure that educationally disadvantaged students received the benefits of Title I funds and that those funds would improve academic achievement, Congress passed legislation in 1978 with new requirements for targeting, monitoring and evaluating the programs using the funds.

As a result, “pull-out” programs became popular in schools. Pull-out programs use Title I funds to remove a Title I child from the classroom for individualized attention. This program became popular because the funds used for each child could be easily documented as being targeted to these children.

Pull-out programs, however, created a two-tiered learning system. Title I students experienced decreased learning opportunities because they were excluded from their regular classrooms and were not learning with the entire class. Moreover, lower learning expectations were placed on Title I students. Studies also showed that children who were pulled out of their classrooms and separated from other students often had problems related to being “labeled” as low-achieving students.

### ***1994 Reauthorization***

In 1994, the Democratic-led Congress and Clinton Administration responded by passing a revolutionary and far-reaching reauthorization of Title I (the “1994 ESEA”). With the intent of challenging the status quo, Congress and the Administration adopted measures to end the tyranny of low expectations by raising standards and expectations for all students.

The key changes in Title I law were that it:

- **Required high standards for all children.** The 1994 ESEA demanded more from schools by eliminating the two-tiered, watered-down curriculum that held poor students to lower standards. The law required each State to develop its own challenging content and performance standards and assessments that would apply to each child in the State's public schools.\* By shifting the applicability of standards to every student, the 1994 ESEA spurred schools to give all children, from the earliest grades through high school, access to effective instructional strategies and challenging academic content.
- **Promoted systemwide reform in schools with high concentrations of poverty.** The 1994 ESEA created a new level of flexibility for Title I funds. Instead of concentrated assistance programs like pull-out programs which provided resources only to certain children, schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged children could use Title I funds for schoolwide programs, thereby benefitting the entire school.
- **Gave parents meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.** The 1994 ESEA required States, school districts and schools to consult with parents as they developed and implemented new standards and challenging practices.
- **Targeted resources to the areas with greatest need.** The 1994 ESEA distributed resources in amounts sufficient to make a difference, to areas and schools where the needs are greatest — by targeting funds to the highest concentrations of poverty. This focused all aspects of Federal, State, and local support on helping children meet challenging State standards.
- **Expanded the flexibility of States and school districts.** The 1994 ESEA directed States and school districts to develop and implement their own standards and assessments, thereby allowing locally developed and driven education reforms. At the same time, the Federal Government increased flexibility by minimizing program requirements that prescribe specific activities that a State, school district or school must undertake.<sup>7</sup>

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\*Content standards are the subject matter that students are expected to learn in school. Performance standards are the results a student must achieve — i.e., how much of the content the student must know.

- **Shifted focus of reform away from compliance and towards results for children.** The 1994 ESEA allowed States and school districts to choose how they would use their Title I funds – as long as schools funded by Title I met “adequate yearly progress.” Thus, the 1994 ESEA gave local schools broad flexibility in their spending decisions in exchange for achieving specified education goals.
- **Improved accountability.** The 1994 ESEA improved accountability by requiring: 1) States to implement standards-based reforms with adequate yearly progress goals to help all students reach high standards; 2) school districts to report on all students’ levels of achievement using disaggregated categories, thereby ensuring student improvement; and 3) States and schools to take corrective action if a school fails to make progress for three consecutive years.

### ***Title I Works***

The 1994 reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary School Act* galvanized bold and creative reform that has delivered significant changes in public education.

### ***ESEA Accelerated Reform***

The 1994 ESEA complemented and accelerated reforms in State and school districts that were at the cutting edge of standards-based reform. School districts in States that began standards-based reforms before 1994 — such as Kentucky, Maryland, and Oregon — found new Federal support to implement challenging standards to improve teaching and learning.<sup>8</sup>

### ***ESEA Is a Catalyst for Change***

Title I has been a driver of change in schools. For States that had not started standards-based reform, the 1994 laws catalyzed innovations in curriculum, teaching practices, and assessments — thereby leading to more rigorous and challenging instruction. More than 80 percent of poor school districts reported that Title I is “driving standards-based reform in the district as a whole.”<sup>9</sup> By 1999, 50 States had challenging content standards and 25 States had adopted challenging performance standards.<sup>10</sup>

## ***ESEA Produced Increases in Student Achievement***

Student achievement is improving in America. Reading and math scores are going up, not only among all students on average, but also among the lowest-performing students and students in the highest-poverty schools.<sup>11</sup>

- Reading scores of nine-year-olds in the highest-poverty schools, where more than 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, rose by nearly one grade level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between 1992 and 1996, reversing a downward trend.
- Between 1994 and 1998, the lowest-achieving fourth graders showed substantial improvements in reading, largely accounting for the rise in the average reading score among all fourth graders nationally.
- Reading achievement for eighth and 12th graders has also improved. The percentage of students scoring at or above the basic achievement level on the main NAEP assessment increased between 1994 and 1998.
- In math, the percentage of students scoring at or above the basic level on the main NAEP assessment increased between 1992 and 1996 for fourth, eighth and 12th graders. In nine States, the achievement of students in the highest-poverty schools met or exceeded the national average for all public school students in 1996.
- Math scores of nine-year-olds in the highest-poverty schools rose by one grade level between 1992 and 1996, and math achievement among the lowest-achieving fourth graders improved roughly one grade level between 1990 and 1996.
- North Carolina made greater gains in math and reading than other States between 1992 and 1996 and a RAND Study found that the probable reason for its gains was its alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment and holding schools accountable for the improvement of all students.<sup>12</sup> States like Colorado and Connecticut which have built reforms around standards were the only States to post significant gains over their NAEP reading scores in both 1992 and 1994.

### ***ESEA Narrowed the Achievement Gap***

The achievement gap between African-American and Latino students and white students has narrowed since 1982. In fact, African-American and Latino students made greater gains in science performance than their white peers. Latinos have made significant gains on NAEP math assessments at all levels.<sup>13</sup>

### ***After ESEA, Fewer Students are Dropping Out of School***

In 1997, fewer students dropped out of high school than in 1983.<sup>14</sup> This decrease has occurred for African-American, Latino and white students. In 1972, 21 percent of African-Americans dropped out of school. By 1997, the rate plummeted to 13 percent. In 1997, 89 percent of students aged 16 to 24 had completed high school or earned a GED.

### ***Students Taking More Challenging Courses***

Students in today's classrooms are taking more challenging courses than students of the 1980s. The percentage of students completing a core curriculum that includes four years of English and three years each of social studies, science, and mathematics more than tripled between 1982 and 1994.

### ***ESEA Reduced the Administrative Burden of Schools and States***

The 1994 ESEA reduced administrative requirements by decreasing regulations in the law by approximately two-thirds. Before the 1994 ESEA, 42 sets of regulations governed elementary and secondary education. Currently, there are only ten sets.

The 1994 ESEA also reduced paperwork by allowing States to consolidate their Federal applications and get waivers where needed. States, in fact, reported the consolidated application slashed their paperwork by 85 percent. These changes expanded to include other Federal education programs. Several programs, including Safe and Drug-Free Schools, the Eisenhower Professional Development Program and Innovative Programs, are entirely free from regulation.



Just as Federal education programs are flexible, the Department of Education has centered on its core purpose: the Department sends approximately 99 percent of Title I dollars to local school districts.<sup>15</sup>

### ***ESEA Achieved Better Targeting on High-Poverty Areas***

In 1993-94, Title I helped 79 percent of students from the nation's highest-poverty schools (defined as those schools in which at least 75 percent of students are from low-income families). By 1997-98, Title I helped 95 percent of the nation's highest-poverty schools. The proportion of highest-poverty secondary schools receiving Title I funds also increased as a result of the 1994 amendments, from 61 percent to 93 percent.<sup>16</sup>

### ***ESEA Led to Progress on State Standards***

Students in the highest poverty elementary schools improved in five out of six states reporting three-year data in reading, and improved their math score in four out of five States in math. Students in Connecticut, Maryland, and North Carolina made progress in both subjects.

### ***ESEA Has Resulted in Progress in Urban Districts***

In ten of thirteen large urban districts that reported three-year trend data, more elementary students in the highest poverty schools currently are meeting school district or State proficiency standards in reading or math. Six districts, including Houston, Dade County, New York, Philadelphia, San Antonio, and San Francisco, made progress in both reading and math.

### ***ESEA Contributed to Progress in Teacher Quality***

From 1994 to 1998, the percentage of public school teachers of grades seven-12 who had a major or minor in their main teaching field increased. For example, the percentage of English and language arts teachers who had a major or minor increased from 78 percent to 86 percent.<sup>17</sup>

## ***Helping High-Poverty Schools: Examples***

Title I is working effectively for the neediest schools and districts. These schools show how Title I has changed the lives of students since 1994.<sup>18</sup>

- Burgess Elementary School in **Atlanta** is a Title I school that uses its funds for a schoolwide program. Burgess serves 430 students, 99 percent of whom are African-American. More than 80 percent of its students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. In 1995, 29 percent of students performed above the national norm in reading — compared to 65 percent in 1998. Thirty-four percent scored above the national norm in math in 1995, compared to 72 percent in 1998.
- At James Ward Elementary School in **Chicago**, the oldest school in Illinois, over 88 percent of the students come from low-income families. Between 1991 and 1998, the percentage of students scoring at or above the test rose from 19 percent to 51 percent and the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile in math rose from 43 percent.
- In **Kentucky**, Title I-related reforms continue to result in substantial improvement in overall performance in the State's public schools. More than 92 percent of Kentucky's schools posted achievement gains in 1995-96, and 50 percent of schools in the State met or exceeded performance goals. Students' performance in Title I schools compared to other schools showed that, since 1993, the overall rate of progress in Title I schools outpaced that of non-Title I schools.
- In **Baltimore County, Maryland**, 18 of 19 Title I schools increased student performance between 1993 and 1998. This success stems from programs supported by Title I including extended year programs; implementation of effective programs in reading; and intensive professional development for teachers.
- At the Harriet A. Baldwin School in **Boston, Massachusetts**, a Title I schoolwide program serves 283 students, more than 80 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and 78 percent of whom come from families speaking a language other than English at home. From 1996 to 1998, Stanford 9 math and reading scores improved substantially. In fact, these scores are currently well above the national median and are much higher than district scores in general.

- In 1996, 66 percent of third graders scored in math at Levels One and Two (little or no mastery of basic knowledge and skills and partial mastery); in 1998, 100 percent scored at Levels Three and Four (solid academic performance and superior performance beyond grade-level mastery).
- In 1997, 75 percent of fourth graders were at Levels One and Two in reading, and only 25 percent at higher levels of proficiency. In 1998, no fourth graders were at Level One in reading, 44 percent were at Level Two, and 56 percent were at Levels Three and Four.
- Goodale Elementary School, a Title I schoolwide school in **Detroit, Michigan**, served 1,171 students in the 1997-98 school year. All students were African American, and 87 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunches. Student academic achievement has risen greatly at Goodale, as shown by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program.

From 1993-94 to 1997-98, fourth grade reading scores in the satisfactory category rose from 22 percent to 65 percent, while scores in the low category dropped from 50 percent to 13 percent. In fourth grade math, scores improved even more, with 24 percent scoring at the satisfactory level in 1993-94, and 76 percent in 1997-98; those in the low category fell from 50 percent in 1993-94 to 11 percent in 1997-98.

Science and writing performance at the fifth grade level also reflect the academic improvement of students. In 1995-96, 14 percent of fifth grade science students scored at the proficiency level, compared to 53 percent in 1997-98. For writing, 30 percent of fifth graders scored in the proficiency level in 1995-96 and 85 percent did in 1997-98.

- Baskin Elementary School in **San Antonio, Texas** serves 419 students, and 92 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Its Title I schoolwide program has resulted in dramatic improvement in student academic performance in the last four years, and a decrease in the performance gap between whites and non-white students.

In 1994, 81 percent of white students achieved the passing standard on the reading assessment, compared to 25 percent of African American students. Similar gaps existed in reading,

math, and writing. In 1998, more than 90 percent of all students, 90 percent of African American students, 90 percent of Hispanic students, and 90 percent of the low-income students passed the reading, writing, and math sections of the test. Student achievement score increases at Baskin Elementary were far greater than district or statewide changes.

### ***Federal Education Programs Work***

The Democratic alternative to **S. 2** ensures that funding for programs like the Safe and Drug-Free School Program, technology grants to schools, and after-school would continue. We know from experience that these programs are effective and help children.

### ***Safer Schools***

**Safe and Drug Free Schools.** The Annual Report on School Safety 1998 reported that schools — compared to homes and communities — are safe places. Students in schools today are not significantly more likely to be victimized than in previous years. From 1993 to 1997, the overall school crime rate fell by one-third. Crime in school facilities or while traveling to or from school has fallen. Currently, most school crime is theft, not serious crime.

The Safe and Drug Free School Program is having a positive effect on schools and school districts, as shown by the programs described below.

- **Counselors in the Classroom (Massachusetts).** This student assistance program identifies students with problems in school and gives them an intensive study skills class and counseling service. As a result of this program, disciplinary actions decreased 21 percent, attendance increased 80 percent and students receiving passing grades increased 80 percent (compared to the first half of the school year without the program).
- **Student Assistance Program (Massachusetts).** This student assistance program places facilitators in schools with the goal of reducing disciplinary actions and absenteeism. In schools with this program, the SAP program increased attendance by 32 to 55 percent and reduced suspensions from 41 to 16 percent.

- **Second Step Program (Washington).** Developed in the Seattle School District, this program supplements existing school curriculum with training on behavior skills. Second Step is being implemented in more than 500 school sites in Washington State and 10,000 schools across the United States and Canada. A study of the program showed that it reduced physical aggression on the playground and in the lunchroom by 28 percent.
- **Cross-Age Refusal Skills (Washington).** This program trains high school peer educators in refusal skills; they then train elementary school students. Outcomes of the program include positive attitudes toward schools, increased understanding about the dangers of drug abuse, and a decrease in alcohol and drug use.
- **Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (New Mexico).** This program teaches fifth and sixth graders about personal and community wellness, coping with peer pressure, working with others, non-violence and substance abuse. Recognized for its contribution to the community, this program enhances self-esteem of students while reducing violence.
- **Project L.I.F.E. (Rhode Island).** Project L.I.F.E. (Latinos Involved in Education) was designed to help three- to five-year-old at-risk children and their parents learn about substance abuse prevention in a linguistically and culturally appropriate curriculum. This program incorporates cutting-edge research that shows that effective education for children and parents combines awareness of alternatives and development of critical thinking skills. This program has enhanced the decision-making process for at-risk children.
- **Status Support Project (Rhode Island).** This program serves more than 300 students, aged 12 to 17, who have been involved in drugs and alcohol and ran away from home. Through the crisis intervention services of this program, many of these teenagers returned home.
- **Pro-Teen (Minnesota).** This intensive program provides mentoring and support for violent, suicidal and conduct disordered students in a restrictive school environment. Students who spent at least six months in the program had an 80 percent success staying in a less restrictive environment after leaving the program. Misbehavior incidents dramatically decreased from 16 per month to one per month.

- **Project YES (Minnesota).** Project Yes (Youth Enriched and Supported) is targeted to students aged five to 12 living in poverty to help reduce the impact of living in poverty. Through friendship groups and mentoring and peer mediation, this program has produced statistically significant improvements in social skills for students.

## Conclusion

In 1994, Congress challenged the status quo in public schools by reforming the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Public schools became responsible for setting high standards for all children, including poor children. These reforms have raised student achievement and have closed the achievement gap between rich and poor children and between white children and children of color.

Though public schools are improving, the status quo is not good enough. The Republican bill, **S. 2**, would eviscerate the 1994 reforms by eliminating the responsibility of schools to set high standards and by ending efforts to close the achievement gap. Democrats will continue to work to ensure that every child in public school, including the most disadvantaged children, get the best possible education.

## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Senator Judd Gregg, quoted in *CQ Weekly*, March 4, 2000.
- <sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I* (1999).
- <sup>3</sup>David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia* (1995).
- <sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges* (1999).
- <sup>5</sup>"Title I of ESEA: Is it Helping Poor Children?" Washington Research Project and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (1969).
- <sup>6</sup>"Title I of ESEA: Is it Helping Poor Children?" Washington Research Project and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.
- <sup>7</sup>Institute for Educational Leadership, "Understanding Flexibility in Federal Education Programs" (2000).
- <sup>8</sup>Urban Institute, *Reports on Reform From the Field: District and State Survey Results* (1997).
- <sup>9</sup>U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges* (1999).
- <sup>10</sup>U.S. Department of Education, *A 5-Year Report Card on American Education* (2000).
- <sup>11</sup>U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results, Continuing Challenges* (1999); *Challenging the Status Quo: The Legacy of the Clinton-Gore Administration* (2000).
- <sup>12</sup>Grissmer and Flanagan, National Education Goals Panel, *Exploring Rapid Achievement Gains in North Carolina and Texas* (1998).
- <sup>13</sup>Secretary Riley, "The Progress of Hispanic Education and the Challenges of a New Century" (March 15, 2000).
- <sup>14</sup>The Center on Education Policy and American Youth Policy Forum, *The Good News About American Education?* (1999).
- <sup>15</sup>United States General Accounting Office, *Federal Education Funding: Allocation to State and Local Agencies for 10 Programs* (1999).
- <sup>16</sup>Stullich, S., Donly, B., & Stolzberg, S., *Within-District Targeting of Title I Funds. U.S. Department of Education, Promising Results, Continuing Challenges: The Final Report of the National Assessment of Title I* (in press).
- <sup>17</sup>U.S. Department of Education, *A 5-Year Report Card on American Education* (2000).
- <sup>18</sup>The Charles A. Dana Center, The University of Texas at Austin, *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools* (1999).